

10/4/79

BEΦΦ4
file R

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Buenos Aires

UNCLASSIFIED

October 4, 1979

OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

Claus W. Ruser, Esquire
Director, East Coast Affairs
ARA/ECA
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): _____

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as _____ ☐ Extend as _____ ☐ Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Dear Claus:

We have received your letter of September 28 and also Mac's call of October 3 on threats to Bob Cox. With regard to the latter, the British Chargé, Hugh Carless, called on the Ambassador on October 2 to discuss Cox's situation. He said that Cox had reported a suspicious incident at his apartment building which led him to spend the night with Carless before he left for Washington to give a speech last week. The Chargé did not convey the impression that the incident was the reason for Cox's departure and made no mention of the departure of his family. At the same time, he and the Ambassador agreed that the local atmosphere is very highly charged following the Menendez coup attempt and it would be well for Cox to spend a while out of the country. They also agreed that Bob had been under extreme tension for a long period and needed a rest. The tone of some of his recent stories and editorials has become rather shrill and has attracted increasing critical comment in the Herald's Letters to the Editor column. The Argentine animals have been highly aroused by recent events, so Buenos Aires is not a healthy place for people like Bob Cox. Last night's bomb at the Jewish seminary was a classic example of this situation.

All these recent events should be ample proof that there is a less desirable alternative to the Videla-Viola leadership. In fact, it would appear that they almost represent a minority view within the military on a number of issues. Last weekend's events show how

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

2

fragile military unity really is and how any controversial decision threatens to rupture it. This suggests that Videla has probably been right in his strategy of placing military unity above all else. What I can't understand is what motivated him to push through the decision to invite the IAHRC. The problem of military unity and the depth of hard-line sentiment in the military and the general population will be addressed in the human rights strategy paper which Townie is now working on.

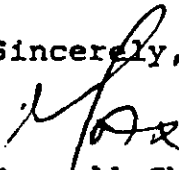
As of this writing, we have no further leads on the identity of the group that bombed Klein's house.

Claus's letter of September 28 crossed with our Buenos Aires 8066 on Divisions in the Military. We hope this was responsive to Sam Eaton's desire for reporting on the succession issue. It is our best estimate to date. Menendez' outburst can be seen as an escape valve which permitted tensions to be vented and was helpful to stability or as a symptom of widespread dissent within the military. If it is the latter, Menendez departure from the scene is not necessarily a major gain for stability and normalization. The Ambassador has directed that we concentrate our efforts on measuring hard-liner discontent within the military in order to update our judgement about the succession issue.

Please call our new Post Management Officer in ARA/EX and raise the matter of a replacement for my secretary. In a phone conversation with our Personnel Officer yesterday PER told her that no replacement had been identified and we would have to ask the Bureau for another TDY secretary. This is a distressing state of affairs. I hope that you can generate more pressure to resolve it.

Best regards.

Sincerely,


Maxwell Chaplin

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED